

The Last Poetry Reading

was up north.

I had a drink on the plane

and landed at the airport, 2 p.m.

6 hours until the reading,

the lady at the travel agency hadn't known her schedules

there had been a plane every 90 minutes;

it was too late.

I was supposed to meet a lady in red pants.

it was 25 or 30 miles to the college.

I had a drink, scotch and water while standing up

at the bar downstairs.

then I went upstairs to the bar and had a bottle of imported

beer, sitting down.

when I went downstairs the lady in red pants was having me

paged.

she was the professor's wife and she taught high school.

the professor had a 3 o'clock class.

we drove off to a bar and waited for the professor.

she was buying and the talk was easy.

the professor came in and got on the scotch and water.

I stayed on the beer. "I've got to warble," I told them.

we drank until 7, then the professor said, "We ought to

eat," and I said, "hell, I'm not hungry, I've got to warble,

I'd rather beer up for the last hour."

they said all right and we got to the reading a little after

8.

I was lucky. after reading a couple of poems I noticed

a water pitcher and a glass sitting there

and I had a drink of water and commented upon its

soullessness. a student walked up and gave me half a bottle

of good wine. I thanked him, had a drink, and went onto the

next poem. so this is how they killed Dylan Thomas?

I thought.

well, they won't get me. I need just enough for the rent,

the beer and the horses.

I got through the reading and the next thing I knew I was in

a houseful of hippies. they passed money for wine and we all

got wine and sat around on the floor and talked. it was a

little dull but not bad.

then I was back at the professor's house

sitting up with him and sharing a 5th of whiskey.

his wife had to get up at 6:30 p.m. for her high school

duties.

so just the 2 of us drank, we talked a little about

literature,

but more about life and women and things that had happened

to us. it wasn't a bad night.

I slept on the downstairs couch.

in the morning I got up and had 2 alka seltzers and a coffee.

I took the professor's dog for a long walk through the woods.

there were trees everywhere. those people had it made.

I came back and waited on the professor. luckily he didn't have any classes that day.

I watched him. I knew what he was doing was wrong: a glass of milk and a large bowl of grape punch. I watched him while he drank it and listened to him in the bathroom while he gave it back.

"what you need," I told him, "is a half glass of beer in a half a glass of tomato juice."

"it was a good reading," he said.

"never mind the reading."

"you said you wanted to catch the 11:30 out of the airport. I don't know if I can drive."

"I'll drive."

she had the new car and he had the old one with the clutch. it was fun learning to use the clutch again.

I stopped twice along the road while the professor vomited. then we stopped at a gas station and had a 7-Up.

"it was a good reading."

"never mind the reading."

the professor drank 2 more 7-Ups.

"you shouldn't do that."

I waited while he vomited again.

then he suggested that we ought to have breakfast.

"breakfast?" I said. "jesus."

well, we stopped and I ordered sausage and eggs and he ordered ham and eggs, plus milk and grapefruit juice.

"don't drink that milk and grapefruit juice," I told him. he drank it. then I waited while he ran outside.

I ate the sausage and eggs and potatoes and toast and drank my coffee. then I ate his ham and eggs and potatoes and toast and drank his coffee.

I drove on into the airport, thanked him for all, and walked into the bar. I had a tomato juice and beer. then I had a plain beer. I just got on the plane when it took off. even the stewardesses didn't look as phoney as usual. I ordered a scotch and water and when the stewardess brought it to me she leaned her body all over me and didn't even smile.

I found one of the cigars I had stolen from the professor and leaned back and lit it with a studied flourish. I sipped at my drink and looked out the window at the clouds and the

mountains and I remembered the factories and the slaughter-houses and the railroad track gangs, I remembered all the dumpy 2 bit slave jobs, the low salaries, the fear, the hatred, the tiredness ...

so this is what killed Dylan Thomas? I thought, sipping at my drink.

bring on the next reading.

-- Charles Bukowski

Los Angeles, CA

Morte D'Arthur

When my cousin Arthur was alive
he drove two Mercedes and a Lancia
had an extra woman in Short Hills
smoked opium hash in a gold pipe
wore a Cuban cigar to my father's funeral
was a friend of Duffy the Lark
and ate mountains of fresh strawberries and yellow cream
in February at the head table in L'Overture's,
washing the mess down with Moet.

Now that my cousin Arthur is dead
he lives with his mother's glaucoma,
packs machinestamped hamburgers
in the Jiffy Meal factory in Hoboken,
masturbates in bus terminals,
squeezes pimples
and sits staring at his hands.

He knows that he is dead when he cuts himself
and he bleeds.

Zeno's Arrow

couldn't move, occupied
an infinity of points --
stationary at each --
or never passed them.
Either way,
motion is illusion.
The way to disprove his point
is to wing an arrow
to his heart.